

Message Text

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ACTION SWF-02

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 AGR-20 EB-11 FEA-02 IO-14 AID-20

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 997

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 5302

FOR AMBASSADOR EDWIN M. MARTIN

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, IN

SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON FERTILIZER QUESTIONS

1. FOLLOWING MY RETURN TO NEW DELHI, I RAISED HERE THE THREE
FERTILIZER QUESTION YOU ASKED ME TO LOOK INTO.

(A) WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE ANY HESITATION ON THE PART OF THE GOI
IN PURCHASING UREA IN THE PERSIAN GULF AREA IF A COMBINATION
OF ARAB CAPITAL, US TECHNOLOGY, AND NATURAL GAS COULD MAKE
UREA AVAILABLE AT REASONABLE PRICES. IN FACT, THE GOI IS
MAKING SERIOUS EFFORTS TO SOLIDIFY ITS REALTIONS WITH THE ARAB
COUNTRIES SO AS TO INSURE CONTINUED SUPPLIES OF CRUDE OIL
AND PETROLEUM PRODUCTS FROM THE AREA.

(B) MY PEOPLE HERE ARE OF THE VIEW THAT THERE IS NO WAY ACCURATELY
TO APPORTION THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF DIFFERENT
PRODUCTION FACTORS IN THE PRODUCTION OF FOOD IN INDIA. THE
FIRST KEY ELEMENT IN THE GREEN REVOLUTION WAS THE DEVELOPMENT
OF SEED WITH UNUSUALLY HIGH-YEILDING CAPABILITIES. TO UTILIZE
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FULLY THE GENETIC CAPABILITY OF HIGH-YIELDING VARIETIES OF SEED,

THE PLANTS MUST BE GROWN UNDER FAVORABLE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS WITH RESPECT TO SUCH FACTORS AS SUNLIGHT, TEMPERATURE, SOIL MOISTURE, AND ESSENTIAL PLANT FOOD NUTRIENTS. IMBALANCES OR INADEQUACIES OF THESE ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS WILL RESULT IN PRODUCTION BELOW THE FULL GENETIC CAPABILITY OF THE SEED, OF COURSE, YOU KNOW ALL THIS ALREADY. HERE IN INDIA, I UNDERSTAND THAT WATER AND PLANT FOOD NUTRIENTS ARE MAJOR LIMITATIONS TO MAXIMIZING THE USE AND BENEFITS OF HIGH-YIELDING VARIETIES OF SEED. THE FERTILIZER SHORTAGE PROBLEM HAS BEEN ESPECIALLY ACUTE IN RECENT YEARS AND THE OUTLOOK CONTINUES TO BE UNFAVORABLE. GOI OFFICIALS ESTIMATE THAT ONE TON OF FERTILIZER NUTRIENTS USED UNDER REASONABLY FAVORABLE CONDITIONS WILL INCREASE GRAIN PRODUCTION BY ABOUT NINE TONS. THERE IS, OF COURSE, CONSIDERABLE VARIATION BETWEEN FALL-HARVESTED AND SPRING-HARVESTED GRAIN CROPS IN THEIR RESPONSE TO FERTILIZER APPLICATION. SPRING-HARVESTED CROPS ARE MUCH MORE RESPONSIVE TO FERTILIZER BECAUSE THE WATER SUPPLY (FROM IRRIGATION) CAN BE CONTROLLED WHICH IS NOT THE CASE FOR FALL-HARVESTED CROPS WHICH ARE GROWN IN THE MONSOON SEASON. (C) OUR INFORMATION INDICATES THAT ABOUT 2/3 OF INDIA'S TOTAL CONSUMPTION OF FERTILIZER IS USED ON FOODGRAIN CROPS AND THE REMAINING 1/3 ON OTHER CROPS SUCH AS FIBERS, SUGARCANE, TEA PLANTATIONS, ETC. FOODGRAINS, OF COURSE HAVE THE HIGHEST PRIORITY BECAUSE OF THE FOODGRAIN SHORTAGE PROBLEM IN INDIA. ANOTHER REASON FOR THE GREATER USE OF FERTILIZER ON FOODGRAIN CROPS IS THAT MUCH MORE PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE WITH FOODGRAIN CROPS IN DEVELOPING NEW VARIETIES THAT ARE RESPONSIVE TO FERTILIZER APPLICATION THAN FOR OTHER AGRICULTURAL CROPS.

2. WE WILL BE SENDING IN A MORE GENERAL ANALYSIS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF FERTILIZER IN THE INDIAN AGRICULTURAL SCENE AND RELATING THIS TO WHAT WE MIGHT DO IF BILATERAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IS RENEWED. IN VIEW OF ITS IMPORTANCE IN INDIA, I WOULD LIKE TO STAY IN CLOSE CONTACT ON THE FERTILIZER-FOOD SITUATION. PLEASE KEEP ME INFORMED AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING WE CAN DO FOR YOU, LET ME KNOW.
MOYNIHAN

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